

Mentoring Construction Superintendents: A Phenomenological Study of Organizational Factors
Affecting Mentors

Capstone Project

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my boss and mentor, Mike Kemp. Working for you has been an opportunity of a life time, thank you. You are a supportive boss and an understanding leader and a role model. My decision to go back to school has probably caused you as much headache as it has me, but I want to thank you for your patience through the process.

Additionally, this thesis is dedicated to my wife, Erica Kegler. You are my partner and my anchor. It was your decision to go back to school that inspired me to go back too. With us both graduating this summer, I can't wait to tackle our next challenge together! Hopefully it is something fun, like a home remodel. You pick out the finishes, I will grab the tools.

Abstract

This study explores the organizational factors mentoring superintendents in the construction industry believe influence and shape their approach to mentoring. Using qualitative research methods, this paper acknowledges the myriad of perspectives and functions that researchers have used to define mentoring relationships and defines mentoring as a developmental relationship. Using a phenomenological research methodology to understand the experiences of mentors in a Superintendent training program, three key factors were identified: proximity, navigating silos, and empowering protégés. Mentors' experience within phenomenological study suggest that a collaborative culture within an organization can mitigate barriers that mentors face.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter One	
Introduction	1
Mentoring in the Construction Industry	2
Significance of Organizational Factors Mentoring	4
Context	6
Research Question	6
Role of the Researcher	7
Assumptions	7
Scope and Limitations of the Study	8
Summary	8

Chapter Two Literature Review

Introduction	10
Origins of Mentoring	10
Defining Mentoring	11
Traditional Definition	11
Is Formal Mentoring Possible?	12
Mentoring as a Developmental Relationship	14
Functions of the Mentoring Relationship	16
Career Functions of Mentoring	17
Psychosocial Functions of Mentoring	18
Participant Attributes to Effective Mentoring Relationships	19
Mentor Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring	19
Protégé Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring	20
Organizational Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring	21
Organizations Influencing Mentoring Relationships	22
Aligning Expectations in a Mentoring Relationship	22
Organizational Support for Mentoring Relationships	23
Lack of Time as a Mentoring Barrier	24
Mentoring Schemas	24

Chapter Three Methodology

Introduction	28
Research Design	28
Participants and Setting	28
Data Gathering and Analysis	30
Summary	31

Chapter Four Results and Discussion

Introduction	33
Proximity	
How Proximity Influenced Mentors Approach to Mentoring	34
Navigating Silos	37
How Navigating Silos affected Mentors Approach to Mentoring	41
Empowering Protégés	43
Challenges – the Conduit of Improvement	44
Role Modeling – an Example of Success	45
Discussion	48

Chapter Five Summary and Conclusion

Introduction	49
Significant Findings	49
Educational Implications	50
Recommendations for Future Research	51
Limitations	52
Summary	52

References	53
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Appendices	62
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Chapter One

Introduction

The building trades has a rich history of apprenticeship and mentorship. The Code of Hammurabi, which dated back to the 18th century Babylon, required artisans to teach their craft to the next generation (Constitution Society, 2019). Today's modern construction site still uses an apprentice model as it has proven to be a reliable method of transferring skills and knowledge to those with less experience. The superintendents that I interviewed in this study would credit their skills through years of experience and observation working in the field of construction rather than any formal education they have received. Many individuals in the construction field did not pursue formal education past a high school diploma, they have skills that can only be obtained through practice.

John (pseudonym) offered me a piece of wisdom that I contemplated long after our interview. John was an experienced superintendent, a skilled craftsman, a firefighter, and a volunteer coach. During the conclusion of the interview he recalled, *"You get back to where we first started this conversation about (individuals that make up the building trades being) the most educated uneducated group of people. That really is true... The superintendents that have been in the field for 20-plus years that just know what they know."*

I agree whole heartedly with John's assessment and would like to expand on his thought by acknowledging the men and women in the Building Trades. Before I dive into my thesis, I want to acknowledge the carpenters of local 322 and the laborers of local 563. It has been the honor of my lifetime to work with and learn from these men and women. Their skills, knowledge, generosity and humility are an inspiration to be around. They're also good friends to have when

something in your house breaks, when you need a buddy to help you pour a patio or build a deck.

Mentoring in the Construction Industry

The construction industry in the United States is in a transitional period in terms of leadership. A significant percentage of the construction superintendent population is reaching an age when they are capable of retiring; it is essential that the industry train replacements (Eckart, 2014). This need is compounded due to the increased demand within the industry as seasonally adjusted nonresidential construction spending is on the rise (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). General superintendents are integral and essential to the success of commercial construction projects. It is their responsibility to organize worksite logistics as well as the labor force to deliver the new or renovated building in a safe, timely, and cost-effective manner. The day-to-day operations on a construction jobsite are run by a general superintendent. This paper will focus on a single company's efforts, referred to from here on out as ABC company, to train and develop general superintendents to manage commercial construction sites. Throughout the remainder of this paper, the term *superintendent* will be used to refer to a general superintendent for a commercial construction project.

Although some educational organizations offer formal credentials to become a superintendent, it is neither standard practice for prospective superintendents to seek out formal credentials, nor do employers typically demand a degree.¹ One driving factor for this may be because it is difficult to replace experience when it comes to truly understanding how construction projects are sequenced (Construction Jobs, 2018). Experienced superintendents can look at a set of construction documents and imagine the appropriate sequence to do the work. At

¹The writer is making this claim from his own personal experience, which was confirmed by reviewing superintendent requirements on the online job recruitment websites ziprecruiter.com and monster.com

the same time, they will sequence the work in a manner that will keep a consistent work flow for the people onsite.

If career training to become a *superintendent* is not done through educational institutions, a different established path must be in place developing tradespeople to become *superintendents*. The validity of using more informal career development techniques has been considered more broadly as organizations have shifted their financial investment from formal education, to that of more informal approaches to learning such as: mentoring, temporary assignments, stretch assignments, and job rotation (Cunningham and Hillier, 2013). ABC company hires unionized trades to execute the work on site. One advantage that comes with unionized labor is the training and development that is provided by the organized labor unions.

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (2018), have a superintendent career training program that is designed to teach individuals how to manage a construction job site. This program includes a mixture of formal classroom training as well as an informal mentoring program that lasts 18 months. The superintendent training program requires companies like ABC to partner with the Carpenter's Union by providing mentors that work with the protégé.

Training within a building trade labor union is an integral service to the mission of the organization. The building trades have had methods of learning such as apprenticeship for hundreds of years (McGarvey, 2017). Although training superintendents and apprentices may seem separate, there are similarities in how the training is conducted. Both programs provide on-the-job instruction with periodic classroom time to help students conceptualize the lessons. Additionally, experienced individuals from the same company as the trainees will assist them to learn their new positions (United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, 2018).

Differences between an apprenticeship program and a superintendent mentee training program include the level of experience and job responsibilities of an apprentice versus a mentee, respectfully. Mentees in a superintendent training program are typical foremen who have years of construction experience. Additionally, building trade apprenticeship programs are registered by the federal or/and state government (www.apprenticeshipmn.com) whereas the superintendent training program is not.

Informal learning such as mentoring is critical for organizations as the pace of change continues and there is a need for companies to be able to adapt quickly to changing demands (Russ-Eft et al., 2014). As mentoring programs emerge preparing the next generation of construction superintendents, of which the carpenter's program is one example, the role of existing superintendents as mentors in those programs becomes increasingly important. Without adequate pedagogical training, superintendents struggle under a process of trial and error to find effective methods to equip their protégés with enough perspective, insight, and depth of knowledge to succeed in today's building industry (Addis, 2016). The role of superintendents as mentors within such training programs is critical to the timely development of aspiring supervisors. This mentoring is beneficial because it provides socialization within a professional role which has been documented as an important element of role learning and role transition (Payne, Berry 2014).

Significance of Organizational Factors Mentoring

There is a need for research on mentoring within the context of the construction industry. There is a gap in mentoring research since this researcher did not find studies that researched the mentoring relationships in superintendent training programs. Higgins and Kram (2001) acknowledge that organizational and industry context are antecedents to the developmental

relationships of employees. The partnership between the union and the organization prompts questions on how the framework in which this mentoring relationship is offered will accept the quality of the mentoring delivered.

Ragins and Verbos (2007) found that the organizational structure will affect the relational knowledge that has been shown to affect mentoring relationship qualities. In my study, the formal mentoring program focuses on industry valued skills that are essential for superintendents to master as well as, an understanding of the associated departments with whom superintendents must interact frequently including but not limited to Human Resources, Legal and Marketing. These program requirements are identified ahead of time and communicated to both the mentor and mentee. As each organization is organized in a unique manner, how that organization delivers the content will affect a mentor's pedagogy for delivering that information to the mentee.

Additionally, research conducted so far indicates that workplace obligations and stresses placed on mentors influence the mentoring relationship (Allen, Poteet, Russel, & Dobbins, 1997). Mentoring superintendents in the trades have full-time jobs that place heavy demands on their time availability. Soklaridis, Et al. (2014) concluded that the time commitment that is required for mentoring dyads is directly affected by the participants geographic proximity to each other. Since factors such as geographic proximity is within the control of the organization, it is imperative to determine how this affects the mentoring relationship.

Finally, Ragins (1994) found that an organizational culture contributed to fostering or constraining the development of mentoring relationships. This finding is supported by Hu, Wang, Yang, and Wu (2014), which found that a mentor's perceived organizational support is positively correlated to perceived mentoring functions received by proteges. It is important for organizations to understand how and recognize which relationship-building efforts within the

organization develop leadership roles like superintendents.

Context

The participants of this study were superintendents that are active mentors in a superintendent training program. This superintendent training program is an 18-month program. Each mentee will attend four two-day sessions at the carpenter's training hall in Las Vegas, Nevada spread over the 18 months. The mentors join the mentees for two of these training sessions. The mentee training sessions are supplemented with on the job training. The program breaks down the job skills into 40 different skill blocks and requires all mentees to complete at least 24 to pass the program. In addition to the formal classroom training and on the job training, twelve mentoring sessions are required. Twenty mentoring topics are identified within the program and a minimum of twelve of these topics must be completed by the mentee to graduate. This study focused on the mentoring superintendent's perspective in this superintendent training program. All the participating superintendents were employed by the same general contractor, referred within this study as ABC corporation. Interviews of the participants attempted to discover organizational factors that shape and influence their approach to mentoring.

Research Question

According to Diamant and Debo, "The (Construction) job superintendent is like the conductor of a symphony orchestra. He must see that all elements are fitted together at the right time and sequence" (p.8). This intimate knowledge of construction sequencing, methods, and practices requires experience (Mincks & Johnson, 2016). For this reason, developing superintendent training programs that integrate a period of formal mentoring, like the one offered by the Carpenter's Union, and recognizing the need to develop skills on the job and glean wisdom from experienced mentors in supplement to formal trainings is vital. Mentors that are

recruited to assist in developing new superintendents will be faced with additional challenges. On top of being responsible for the daily supervision of construction activities on the project, the mentoring superintendent will need to invest time and energy with the protégé. Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs (1997), the authors identified facilitating and inhibiting organizational factors that affect mentoring relationships. Construction organizations desiring to capitalize on these superintendent training programs must identify organizational factors that affect the mentoring relationship. It must be the organization's goal to eliminate mentoring barriers, provide support for the mentors, and provide an environment that nurtures developmental relationships. The purpose of this study was to identify organizational factors that mentoring superintendents in the construction industry believe influence and shape their approach to mentoring.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher, in this study works for ABC company in the Quality Control department. This position supports superintendents and other project members by providing training, site observations, and field support regarding building codes and industry standards. The quality of the superintendent training program directly impacts my work. The more knowledge and experience a field superintendent has, assists in identifying problems early, reducing the amount my role interrupts the flow of work. In focusing on the mentor's perspective and the organizational factors that affect the mentoring relationship, I am hoping to shed some light on the needs of the mentors and how ABC can support the development of the new superintendents.

Assumptions

This study was conducted using qualitative research methods as the methodological paradigm. As illustrated by Johnson and Christensen (2016), qualitative research generates knowledge from data collected during field work. This method was appropriate due to the nature

of the inquiry, the available population that fit the criteria being studied as well as the time constraints available to this researcher. This qualitative study will use phenomenological research methods and tools to understand the mentor's experience from the mentor's perspective. Using the phenomenological research method, the researcher will be the primary data collection instrument and the nature of the findings is subjective to the interpretations of the researcher.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study included five mentoring superintendents from a single company. These participants were mentors in a Superintendent Training Program. Four of the superintendents were participants in a Carpenter's Union sponsored program with the remaining superintendent participating in a company sponsored program. The conclusions drawn from the results of this study can only be applicable to the participants of the study and therefore the results cannot be generalized to the population.

Summary

As construction organizations leverage superintendent training programs to develop their workforce, it is important to understand facilitating and constraining factors in the process. This study will look at five mentoring superintendents from a single company that are participants of superintendent training programs. Using a qualitative design, this study will use a phenomenological research method to discover the organizational factors that mentoring superintendents believe shape and influence their approach to education within a superintendent training program. In the next chapter a literature review will identify what researchers have discovered about mentoring relationships to date in relation to the purpose of this study.

It will show a significant gap in how researchers have defined mentoring relationships.

Additionally, it will identify several environmental, interpersonal and other factors that affect the mentoring relationship.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, the writer reviews the origins of mentoring and the importance it has in society by exploring how the definition of *mentoring* has developed in research and been included in and excluded from many developmental relationships. The goal of this study was to explore organizational factors that shape and influence a superintendent's approach to mentoring. The goal of the literature review was to understand the functions of mentoring from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. In a formal mentoring relationship, these stakeholders include the mentor, the protégé, and the organization. It is not enough to look exclusively at the perspective of the superintendent because mentoring is a reciprocal relationship (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). The actions of one stakeholder will result in a response from the others. In order to understand how organizational factors, shape and influence the mentoring relationship, it is important to understand the context.

Following the discussion of the research on mentoring, the theoretical framework for this study is discussed, defining key terms and critical concepts, which provided a perspective from which to interpret the data from the interviews.

Origins of Mentoring

The term *mentor* has roots in ancient Greece. According to Greek mythology, Odysseus left his son Telemachus to a trusted friend and counselor, who was named Mentor. That wise tutor, coach, and sponsor mentored Telemachus as his protégé (Hamilton, 1942). While the root of the word *mentor* is grounded in Greek mythology, the practice of mentoring has been an integral part of human society for thousands of years. To punctuate the importance of mentoring in our society, Levinston (1978) described the stages of human development in which being a protégé and becoming a mentor to others are integral components. Since mentoring is part of our social identity and key to successfully passing on our knowledge to future generations, it is only natural for organizations to encourage its development.

Mentoring is not a new phenomenon within organizations or indeed the society writ large. Indeed, this developmental relationship is integral to the human experience; however, formal mentoring has only become a part of the American culture in the last 30 years (Allen, Poteet, Eby, Lentz, 2004).

Defining Mentoring

Traditional Definition

Since the mid-1980s, formal mentoring programs have gained popularity among corporations and other organizations (Allen, Poteet, Eby, Lentz, 2004). Many researchers have separated formal from informal mentoring. For example, Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) noted that “formal mentoring programs are developed with organizational assistance. Informal mentoring relationships are developed spontaneously, without organizational assistance” (p. 1182).

The traditional definition of *mentoring* has described “a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé’s career” (Kram, 1985). From an organizational perspective, this development is intended to be career-oriented; however, mentoring research has covered the subject for many purposes that were not career-oriented. Examples of these would include at-risk-youth mentoring; undergraduate, graduate, or even doctoral student mentoring; and religious mentoring (eg. Busch 1985; Erickson & Phillips, 2012; Gershenfeld 2014; Raposa, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2016).

The traditional definition of *mentoring* is not without its faults. One of these faults is associated with the factor of age. There is no necessary reason why the mentor must be chronologically older than the protégé. In fact, there have been many examples in which there is no significant age difference between the two, and the mentor may even be younger than the mentee (Murphy, 2012).

Another fault of this definition is that it only captures the perspective of the mentee. Although research has primarily focused on the benefits of *mentoring* on the protégé, there is limited literature that focuses on outcomes for mentors. This suggests that mentoring benefits them as well. These benefits include reports of career success, social recognition, and satisfaction (Allen, Poteet & Burroughs, 1997; Ragins and Scandura 1999).

Is Formal Mentoring Possible?

The traditional definition of *mentoring* has been adjusted throughout the decades as researchers have looked for ways to find a definition that more accurately describes the phenomenon. A second point that researchers disagree on within mentoring literature, is whether or not formal mentoring programs may be included within the definition. Traditionally, the

dyadic relationship is initiated between the mentor and the protégé spontaneously and without the help of a matchmaker (Ragins & Cotton 1999). Research has found that mentoring pairs are attracted to each other for a number of reasons, including shared interests and mutual benefits (Allen, Day & Lentz, 2005; Noe, 1988). Formal mentoring programs are the result of organizations attempting to utilize the benefits of mentoring to achieve institutional goals. In these programs, the mentors and protégés may not necessarily choose each other voluntarily (Cotton, Miller, & Ragins, 2000).

Secondly, unlike informal mentoring, formal mentoring programs usually have a defined period, rarely longer than a year, during which the parties are committed to each other (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005). Informal mentoring relationships commonly last longer than formal ones and will continue as long as the parties remain involved, although the nature of the relationship may change over time (Chao, 1997; Kram, 1985; Pollock, 1995).

A third difference between formal and informal mentoring is the number of stakeholders that define the goals of the relationship. Informal mentoring relationships are unique in that each relationship is defined by the mentor and protégé involved; whereas, the goals of a formal mentoring program are imposed by external sources (Allen & Eby, 2003). These organizationally prescribed goals are designed to benefit the institution that created the formal mentoring program in the first place. Examples of institutional goals may include the socialization of relatively new employees (Benabou & Benabou, 2000), providing a “fast track” into management positions for talented individuals (Barbian, 2002), enhancing diversity within management by targeting women and minority protégés (Gibb, 1999; Jossi, 1997), and improving organizational communication (Singh, Bains, & Vinnicombe, 2002).

Despite the structural differences between formal mentoring programs and informal

mentoring relationships, it may be impossible for an observer to distinguish between the two when they witness either of them. Informal and formal mentoring relationships often utilize an informal method to exchange information and often appear to an observer to be casual meetings. To the mentor and protégé, these meetings *may* be casual, but they still have a structure that is familiar to the members of the dyad (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007).

The distinction between formal and informal mentoring programs has not been accepted by every researcher. For example, Bozeman and Feeney (2007) believe that *all* mentoring relationships are informal. “Another implication of our definition, an especially important one, is that mentoring is an informal social exchange. This means that the term ‘formal mentoring’ is an oxymoron. This does not mean, however, that the thousands of formal mentoring programs set up in organizations do not result in mentoring relationships, only that they do not develop on command. The question of whether someone in a formal mentoring program has a mentor is an empirical question.... We view formal mentoring programs as sowing the seeds of relationships, many of which flower into useful and productive mentor relationships” (p. 732). In other words, the role of the organization is simply to be a matchmaker. The relationship between all mentors and mentees, according to these researchers, is one of a dyadic pairing. Nevertheless, this relationship may or may not take place within a formal organizational framework, which initiates the pairing and determines such procedural matters as where, when, and for how long the parties meet.

Mentoring as a Developmental Relationship

In the previous two sections, we have seen the definition of mentoring evolve as the literature on the phenomenon expands nuances of the relationship. In the first section, the traditional definition was challenged because its perspective was limited to a single stakeholder

in the relationship. Evolving definitions, such as Bozeman and Feeney's (2007), include the additional perspectives that benefited from the relationship. Their definition purposefully excluded the interests of the organization within the definition; however, this limitation has not been universally adopted. Ragins and Verbos' (2007) elegant definition of mentoring will be adopted in this paper moving forward. Ragins and Verbos' definition did not make a distinction between a formal or informal mentoring relationship, rather these authors state that mentoring is better defined as "a developmental relationship that involves mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career domains" (p. 92). Johnson (2014) agrees with this assessment. Both Ragins and Verbos and Johnson insist that mentoring exists on a continuum in regard to its relational and developmental qualities. Both of these approaches are a departure from the dialectical approach offered by Bozeman and Feeney. These new perspectives allow mentoring relationships to exist in a much broader context without diminishing the value they have in our lives.

Defining *mentoring* as a developmental relationship has expanded the insights that researchers have been able to glean from studying mentoring for the last 20 years. These positive work relationships may transcend organizational boundaries (Ragins, 1997). Mentoring relationships can develop through external networks. Studies have shown that these networks can even operate over the Internet as "virtual mentoring" (Ensher, Heun & Blanchard, 2003; Hamilton & Scandura 2003).

Researchers have also shown that mentoring is not limited to a dyadic relationship but can be expanded to include positive career and professional networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas 2001; Kram, 1996). Ragins and Verbos (2007) says: "Under this perspective, mentoring extends beyond the dyad to a constellation of developmental relationships that supply

career assistance and psychosocial support to the protégé” (p. 93). This perspective acknowledges that individuals are affected by a constellation of work and nonwork relationships.

Functions of the Mentoring Relationship

Lundsford (2012) observed that mentoring is often assessed without taking function into account. The functions of the mentoring relationship are critically related to why mentoring has value. These functions are identical whether the mentoring relationship originated formally or informally. Mentoring relationships facilitate career functions and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). Noe (1988) agreed that career and psychosocial functions are indeed aspects of a mentoring relationship. Scandura (1992) separated role modeling from psychosocial functions, insisting that mentoring provides psychosocial, role-modeling, and career functions.

It would be a mistake to look at the psychosocial functions and career functions in isolation from each other, rather than as interdependent functions that support each other. A mentoring meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2004) found that there was a correlation between psychosocial mentoring and career outcomes. The psychosocial aspects of mentoring have been shown to affect career outcomes and vice versa.

Career Functions of Mentoring

Career functions are the aspects of the relationship that enhance advancement. It is the career functions of mentoring that make it attractive to organizations, since it has been associated with increased job performance, lower employee turnover, and advanced career development (Allen & O’Brien, 2006; Germain, 2011; Wilson & Elman, 1990). Additionally, mentoring may help to facilitate other organizational goals including: communicating a corporate mission and vision, as well as educating protégés about formal and informal organizational structures (Benabou & Benabou, 2000). In contrast to formal training, mentoring has been shown to be

effective at transferring tacit knowledge from mentors to protégés (Laiho & Brant, 2012).

The career functions of mentoring are attractive to protégés who seek out and engage a mentor, whether in a formal mentorship program or an informal relationship. For the protégés, evidence of career functions is commonly seen as sponsorship, increased visibility, coaching, protection from organizational politics, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1985). The career benefits include but are not limited to salary level, promotion rate, and job satisfaction (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Scandura, 1992).

The career functions of mentoring also extend to the mentors. Although researchers have focused more on the protégé's perspective, mentoring has been seen as a balanced relationship in which both parties benefit (Allen, Poteet, Russel, & Dobbins, 1997). Kram (1983) noted that, "in providing a range of developmental functions, a senior manager gains recognition and respect from peers and superiors for contributing to the development of young managerial talent" (p. 614). Later researchers have recognized and validated these observations (e.g., Allen, 2004; Grima, Paille, Mejia, & Prud'homme, 2014). Furthermore, mentoring has been correlated with increased performance by the mentors. This may be because the mentoring process forces mentors to reevaluate their own methods (Kram, 1985). Also, the mentors' increased performance may be attributed to learning technical skills, such as computer usage, from their protégés (Murphy, 2012).

Psychosocial Functions of Mentoring

The psychosocial functions of the mentoring relationship enhance an individual's sense of aptitude, self, and efficacy in a professional role. These functions include role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. All of which, in Kram's (1983) words, enhance the mentees' sense of "competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in the

managerial role” (p. 614).

Early mentoring theory lacked the perspective to include psychosocial functions for the mentor, but current research indicates that mentoring successfully provides important psychosocial needs for the mentor, including a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction (Cronan-Hillix, Gensheimer, Cronan Hillix , & Davidson, 1986). Pullins and Fine (2002) found that the psychosocial benefits for the mentor include rejuvenation and job satisfaction.

The lack of a relational perspective of mentoring may be one reason that many organizations ignore its psychosocial functions. This viewpoint has led many formal mentoring programs to focus on the career aspects of mentoring and ignore the psychosocial functions, which have been shown to support those career functions. This incomplete ideology has urged protégés to treat mentors as a career resource, viewing them as a way to foster independence, but ignoring the reciprocal nature of mentoring relationships (e.g., see Fletcher, 1998; Kram, 1996). When mentoring relationships are viewed as reciprocal in nature, positive psychological outcomes can generate feelings of hope, optimism, and resiliency (Luthans & Youseff, 2004).

Participant Attributes to Effective Mentoring Relationships

The quality of a mentoring relationship is linked to compatible personal attributes of the participants. Researchers have shown that there are several personal attributes that can be predictors of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship (Burg, 2010; Mazerolle, Bowman, & Klossner, 2015; Straus, Johnson, Marquez, & Feldman, 2013). These attributes include shared values, similar personalities, a symbiotic mindset, and openness to the relationship. In this section, the writer will discuss how the individual stakeholders contribute to the mentoring relationship.

Mentor Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring

Cho, Ramanan, and Feldman (2011) identified several mentor attributes that contribute to the success of a mentoring program. These attributes include having enthusiasm, compassion, and an interest in others; serving as a career guide with a purpose tailored to mentee needs; committing time for regular and frequent meetings with mentees; supporting personal and professional balance; and serving as a role model who sets high expectations. In a study of 54 faculty members at two academic health centers, one in Toronto and the other in San Francisco, Straus et al. (2013) found that the most commonly reported attribute of effective mentors is the trait of altruism. Other valued characteristics that emerged from this study included honesty, trustworthiness, and being an active listener.

Janssen, Vuuren, and Jong (2014) found that mentors have different motives for what they do, ranging from self-focused, to protégé-focused, to relationship-focused, to organization-focused, to unfocused. This study builds on previous research (e.g., Allen, 2003) which found that mentors may either be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Mentees paired with mentors

who were more relationship-focused reported more psychosocial mentoring, while mentees paired with organization-focus or self-focused mentors reported that the mentoring relationship provided more career functions.

Pfund, et al (2014) suggest that training can help mentors to develop competency in mentoring. Larsson, Pettersson, Eriksson, and Skoog (2016) found that “mentoring organizations must be aware of the challenges that mentors face during the mentoring relationship. To facilitate the situation of a mentor, the organization has a responsibility to prepare and support the mentor during their ongoing engagement” (p. 19).

Protégé Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring

Straus et al (2013) reported several characteristics of effective mentees. The two most prominent traits were openness to feedback and being an active listener. Other characteristics included being responsible, paying attention to time lines, and taking initiative. Allen (2004) discovered that mentors are more willing to work with protégés that have high potential. In the same study, Allen also found a correlation between a protégés willingness to learn and a mentor’s willingness to spend time mentoring. Interestingly, the correlation between willingness to learn was higher in Allen’s study than protégé potential suggesting that, “protégé willingness to learn can help compensate for a lack of ability” (p.474).

Organizational Attributes Associated with Effective Mentoring

Since mentoring relationships do not exist in a vacuum, the organizational context is a significant influence in their success. Several factors within organizations have been shown to impact the mentoring relationship (Dubois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverhorn, & Valentine, 2011; Stukas & Tanti, 2005). These include program infrastructure, design, practices, and ways of managing the mentors. Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006) found a positive correlation between

organizational support for mentoring and received mentoring functions. The same study indicated that organizations that hold mentors accountable, creating a positive environment for mentoring, were correlated with an increase in psychosocial mentoring. An explanation for this may be because explicit policies around mentoring and procedures to handle complaints deter relationship problems and help resolve issues.

Other factors, including organizational structure, have been shown to impact mentoring outcomes. Organizations with a flattened corporate hierarchy have also been identified as a barrier to mentoring (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997). One explanation for this is that organizations with flattened corporate hierarchy have fewer individuals viewed as a seasoned senior manager and therefore less attention is paid to forming developmental relationships.

Organizational-level mentoring support has been shown to be positively correlated with employee satisfaction (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). Examples of organizational support from a mentee's perspective include: supervisors helping mentees to find time for their meetings, organizational rewards for program completion, and leadership communication of support for the program (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2010). Mentees in organizations that appropriately support them find it easier to put priority on and derive value from their mentoring relationships (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003).

Organizations Influencing Mentoring Relationships

The claims of organizational benefits that have been attributed to mentoring have attracted much attention in recent decades. In formal mentoring programs, the areas of focus regarding organizational support extend to matching dyads and educating the participants on the goals of the programs (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2009). The extent to which organizations structure, development, and implement formal mentoring programs has not been consistent.

Regardless of the organizational reasons for establishing a mentoring program, researchers have shown that the pairing of the dyads is a critical step in any formal mentoring program (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992).

Aligning Expectations in a Mentoring Relationship

There is a consensus among researchers that the participants in mentoring relationships need to understand the roles involved. For example, Gibbs (1999) argues that “clarity of role is, in principle, an essential element of any effective social interaction” (p. 1060). Allen and Poteet (1999) recommended that mentors be trained prior to pairing with mentees in order to address any skill, ability, or knowledge deficiency that may adversely affect the mentoring outcome. This suggestion has been endorsed by other researchers (e.g., Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002). Smith, Howard, and Harrington (2005) maintain that “the failure or success of a formal mentor relationship may be a direct consequence of matching administrator, mentor, and protégés expectations. To minimize confusion and potential dissatisfaction, we recommend training and clear contracting for all of the above stakeholders” (p. 47). As organizations attempt to gain the benefits associated with mentoring relationships, it is important to align the expectations and commitments of the mentors and the mentees. Huskins et al. (2011) suggested that formal contracts increase the success rate of formal mentoring programs.

Organizational Support for Mentoring Relationships

Kram (1985) observed that organizations can influence the mentoring functions of developmental relationships. In a qualitative study by Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs (1997), the authors identified facilitating and inhibiting organizational factors. The principal facilitating factors were organizational and managerial support for employee learning and development,

company training programs, and a collaborative environment. The principal inhibiting factors were deadline pressures, a competitive environment, a flat management structure (allowing for few mentors), and unclear expectations of the employees.

Maurer and Tarulli (1994) and Rynes and Rosen (1995) both found a positive correlation between management support of formal mentoring programs and the success of those programs in terms of employee development. Hu, Wang, Yang and Wu (2014) found that mentors who perceive organizational support were more likely to provide mentoring functions to mentees. Interestingly, mentors who perceive organizational support are more likely to display traits of altruism toward their protégé. Hu, et al. suggest that “for mentors who are less likely to have an inner drive to mentor others, perceptions of organizational factors that provide extrinsic rewards are important in motivating these mentors to play the role of nurturing mentors, which is consistent with the idea of performance reward expectancies in the continuous exchange relationship between employers and employees” (p. 35).

Lack of Time as a Mentoring Barrier

According to Ragins and Scandura (1999), Simon and Eby (2003), and Underhill (2005), researchers have disproportionately favored the benefits of mentoring over its costs and barriers. In addition, much of the research has focused on the mentor and the protégé without factoring in environmental factors. The common exception to this in the literature is the consensus that a mentor’s lack of time to mentor is a barrier to protégé development (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Allen, Poteet, Russel, & Dobbins, 1997; Billett, 2003).

Mentoring Schemas

Chapter Two began by describing the evolution of how mentoring has been defined within the academic literature. Two major differences exist between Kram’s (1985) definition

and Ragins and Verbos' definition that is adopted by this paper. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, Ragins and Verbos defined mentoring as "a developmental relationship that involves mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career domains" (p. 92). This definition is important as organizations increasingly seek to harness mentoring relationships to develop people within their organization.

Ragins and Verbos framed this definition of mentoring by integrating it into relational schemas. Baldwin's (1992) defined relational schemas, as "cognitive structures representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness" (p. 461). Guided by this paradigm of social cognition, Ragins and Verbos developed a mentoring schema. This schema is a "fluid cognitive map derived from past experiences and relationships that guide mentor's and protégé's perceptions, expectations and behaviors in relationships" (Ragins & Verbos, 2007. p 101).

Ragins and Verbos (2007) see organizations as well as individual participants as an important source of relational knowledge that informs and influences the mentoring schemas. "The clarity, salience, and strength of relational knowledge should influence the degree of detail, specificity, and quality of the mentoring schema" (p.106). As organizations adopt formal mentoring programs, Ragins and Verbos see the guidelines for expected behaviors between participants as an opportunity for the organization to reduce the potential of incongruent mentoring schemas among participants.

The relational differences are an important consideration to Ragins and Verbos in forming the mentoring schema model. The first relational difference originates from Bowlby's (1969) work. Bowlby found that individuals develop attachment styles from their early childhood experiences. Ragins and Verbos' claims that attachment styles effect mentoring schemas is substantiated by Germain's (2011) work. Germain found that there is correlation

between the relational functionality of mentoring dyads and the attachment styles of the individuals. According to Germain, there are nine possible combinations of mentor, mentee personality pairings. Certain pairs are likely to have high relational functionality and others will be likely to have low relational functionality. This is an important consideration for organizations that pair individual in formal mentoring programs.

Other factors that affect relational differences include self-construal (Marcus & Kitayama, 1991) and identity (Allen, 2003; Aryee et al., 1996). Both these factors look at how an individual's perception of themselves influence their relationships. Individuals may view themselves as independent or interdependent of their relationships. The more interdependent an individual's self-construal and identity are, then researchers expect a higher association with mentoring functions and perceived relational quality (Allen, 2003; Aryee et al., 1996; Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

As illustrated in the mentoring schema model provided by Ragins and Verbos(2007), the relational differences and relational knowledge influence the mentoring schemas. These will predict expectations and behaviors of the participants. Mentors and mentees will both evaluate these expectations and behaviors based on the degree to which the members agree and conform to the norms established for the relationship (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This evaluation will fall within Ragins and Verbos' relational quality continuum. Dyads that score higher on the continuum may enter a cycle of relational mentoring which would "reinforce interdependent self-construals, relational identities and secure attachment styles" (p. 109).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to describe which organizational factors superintendents that are mentors in the construction industry believe influence and shape their approach to mentoring within a formal superintendent training program. In this chapter, I will first discuss the research design of the study and then go into detail about the superintendents I interviewed. Next, I will describe how I created the questions for the interviews, and I will close with a description and analysis of the collected data.

Research Design

According to Creswell (2015), qualitative research focuses on exploring a central phenomenon or concept. The design of the present study is phenomenological, which means that I will focus on the lived experiences of the interviewees. The reason I chose this style of research design was that I wanted to better understand the superintendents' mentor experience from inside their consciousness. Growing up with a father who was a superintendent in the construction industry and working on a daily basis with other superintendents in the industry has made me develop a passion for understanding how these individuals develop professionally.

Setting and Participants

This study will take place at a medium-sized commercial general contracting company in the Midwest, which I will call the ABC Corporation. Unlike some general contractors, which subcontract out all the work, ABC is signatory to several trade unions and bids to perform its own carpentry, masonry, and concrete work. It has approximately 500 non-union office

employees and 500 trade union workers. The superintendents at ABC have the option to be either union or non-union, although more than 90% of them have been promoted from the building trades, and have kept their union membership after being promoted to the rank of superintendent.

The identities of the participants in this study will remain anonymous and pseudonyms will be used when referencing a specific mentor. I selected the first five superintendents who agreed by e-mail to be interviewed from a list of qualified candidates given to me by the ABC's Director of Field Operations. All of the interviewees will be mentoring mentees in a formal superintendent training program. Four superintendents that responded were participants of a program sponsored by the Carpenters Union. At the time of this study, these four superintendent mentors represented 100% of the mentors that were currently participating in that particular program within the company. The fifth participant was part of an internal company initiative that developed an internal superintendent training program that used a similar format to the Carpenter's program. All of the mentors were initially assigned to two mentees. At the time of the interview, two mentors had lost a mentee due to a change in employment by a mentee.

Mentor pseudonym	Mentor's years of construction experience	Mentor Program Administrating Organization	# of Mentees	Mentee On Site	Mentee Off Site
Peter	15	Carpenters Union	2	1	1
James	35	Carpenters Union	2		2
John	30	Carpenters Union	2		2
Andrew	30	Carpenters Union	1	1	
Simon	20	ABC program	1		1

Data Gathering and Analysis

I will collect data through in-person, one-on-one interviews that are semi-structured, which will allow for the conversation to flow freely. The interviews will last approximately ninety minutes. In the interview the participants were asked questions that related to their experience as a mentor to an assistant superintendent². The interviews were audio recorded and stored on a personal computer to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

The conducted interviews contained many topics. The superintendents were asked whether they perceived the program structure facilitated or restricted their approach to mentoring. The interview covered how the mentor perceived quality of the interpersonal relationship with the mentee. Additional interview questions inquired how the mentor perceived the workload balance between managing a construction project and investing time into mentoring their mentee. The topics chosen for the interview questions were to inspire the superintendents to share their experiences as a mentor and describe what organizational factors shape and influence their mentoring.

Once the data was collected, the five interviews were listened to several times, and the first review was to code the interviews topically. Each interview was cataloged minute by minute to document which topics the superintendents were discussing at the time. This allowed for time notations to be made and further analysis easier. After the initial review, the recordings were listened to again, to note any topical emphasis, recurrences, and emotion that occurred to analyze how that could have shed some light on how that topic affected them personally during their mentoring experience. Upon finishing the topic cataloging, the interviews were reviewed once again for a within interview analysis. During the within interview analysis, the data was observed

² See appendix II for interview protocol.

to find patterns in topics, feelings, and phenomena within each interview specifically. Some of the participants had main topics that would resurface several times during their interview. Some mentioned topics once or twice but added more emotion and emphasis to their stories they were sharing indicating it was a topic or experience of importance.

Upon the analysis of the original topic cataloging and within interview examination, all five interview results were compared to each other for the first time. Several patterns that were observed within each interview separately, now started forming patterns across several of the participant responses. Some patterns that were significant in one interview, were never shared in the other interviews, where other experiences were shared amongst all five interviews. The analysis of the data showed some shared experiences of influence by social relationships by the superintendents who were interviewed, ultimately displaying several prominent themes. Though some of the superintendent experiences were not shared by others in the study, they had similar feelings associated with other superintendents, but different reasoning's to why they felt that way. This allowed for different types of themes to be presented, that were not thought of originally.

Since the first and second rounds of coding topics focused on a person or group of people being the influence of the transfer experience, the within interview helped shape not only who these relationships were with but focused on the nature of these relationships with the superintendents, and further how those relationships influenced the overall mentoring experience.

Summary

The design and methods implemented in this study were phenomenological. This method accurately portrays the superintendent's experiences and perceived organizational factors that shaped their approach to mentoring. The study conducted face-to-face, one-on-one interviews with superintendents who were currently assigned to a mentee in a superintendent training

program at the time of the interview. Once the interviews concluded, the data was collected, and the commonalities of themes from each student became predominant. In the following chapter I will describe the interviews and present the analysis of the time spent, gathering superintendent testimonials.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the thematic analysis are identified and described. These are the organizational factors that mentoring superintendents in ABC believe shape and influence their mentoring relationship with their mentee. After the themes have been identified and described, this chapter concludes with a discussion about the results.

Proximity

The first theme that emerged from the analysis was the importance of proximity between the mentor and the mentee. The term proximity, as used in this study, relates to the geographical distance the mentee has to the mentor. The findings of this study support the results of Polikoff, Desimone, Porter and Hochberg (2015) who found that proximity and availability were particularly important antecedents in quality mentoring relationships. In this study there were several mentors that were paired with mentees that worked on the same project as a subordinate. Most of the mentor/mentee pairings in this study were on separate projects. These project sites may range in proximity from across town to across state lines. The distance between the dyads made the time commitment needed to get together increasingly problematic. The inhibiting time constraint, as related to this study's theme of proximity, is supported in the mentoring literature. An example of this is Allen, Poteet and Burrough's (1997) qualitative study identified several organizational factors that inhibited and facilitated mentoring. Specifically, Allen, Poteet and Burroughs identified time and work demands as significant inhibiting factors to a mentoring relationship. In the present study, mentors and mentees working on the same project will have

daily and frequent interaction with each other. As both the mentor and mentee are integral to project deliveries, their time needs to be prioritized to managing the project that they are assigned to. This contributes to the successful delivery of the project and minimizes the risk on behalf of ABC company as well as the project partners.

Other examples of proximity being an organizational factors were also supported in mentoring research and were described by Sambunjak (2015) as an organizational work design. Sambunjak recognized that organizations can facilitate interactions between dyads by providing a work environment that facilitates regular interactions between mentor and mentee. Within the organization that was the setting of this study, the field operations division of ABC is responsible for assigning individuals to manage and complete the projects that ABC is executing. Additionally, the field operations division is also responsible for recruiting mentors and assigning mentees to these individuals.

How Proximity Influenced Mentor's Approach to Mentoring

Mentors in this study adapted to proximity by capitalizing on the near proximity advantage by using project challenges as mentoring opportunities. Mentors that did not have the luxury of daily interaction with the mentees on the same project, often adapted their mentoring style by creating a regimented schedule in which the participants would get together and focus on program specific mentoring topics. Mentors with mentees that were not geographically close, supplemented this approach with frequent phone communication to the mentee and/or reaching out to the project superintendent where the mentee was working. This assisted the mentor in gathering information on potential areas of improvement or to facilitate potential learning opportunities that were present on the site in which the mentees were working.

As a reminder of what was discussed in chapter three, of the five participants, Peter had

two mentees, one off site and one on the same site. James and John had two mentees, both mentees on remote jobsites. Andrew had one mentee on site. Finally, Simon had one mentee on a different site. This configuration of mentor and mentee pairing resulted in most of the mentees working on a project without daily interaction with their mentor. The results of this study support the findings of Davis and Nakamura (2010) and indicates that proximity had a significant impact as the interactional foundations including support, responsiveness and protégé-centeredness. Mentors in this study that had mentees on the same project were able to turn daily challenges into teachable moments. For example, the participant Peter was a mentor to two individuals, one on site and one on a project across town. Regarding the onsite mentee he felt, *“that was much more conducive to the process and the whole mentoring thing because he was there. We worked together every single day for the better part of two years.”* Peter juxtaposed this experience with his mentee that worked across town, *“He couldn't just take three hours and drive up for a mentoring session, and reversely I've got similar stuff going on. So, what we had to do was (be) diligent and strict on when we met and make sure to keep it very regular. We'll say, 'Hey, okay. We're going to do the third Thursday at 2 o'clock in the afternoon,' or whatever. That was just random, but, 'Come hell or high water, we're going to get together whether we meet in the middle, whether I drive down to you, you drive up to me.' That always sounds better than it really is too.”*

James and John's mentoring experience was different in that both mentees worked on separate jobsites. The solution to mentoring for both James and John with mentees was to schedule meetings on a monthly basis and organize the workload to accommodate dedicated time spent in travel and away from site. This was a similar approach to Peter's mentoring technique, as he also had a protégé that worked on a different project. John supplemented his mentoring

approach with regular telephone calls to keep in touch with his mentees. *“While we were going through the program it was good,”* claimed John when asked about the frequency of contact with his mentees, *“We were in contact probably more than we needed to be. They were both young, not young in age but young in positions. They were both active, very active assistant supts on significant projects. So, it was good that they could stay engaged. We talked almost weekly throughout the 18 months. Which was pretty good. I wasn't expecting that much contact which told me they had a comfort level with me that they could call and bounce things off me... I told them, ‘Hey, if there's anything at all, even it's not related to the subject matter we're on or it's a question, if it's anything I can help out, call, or come down to my job or I'll come to yours,’ whatever that looked like.”* It should be noted that John did supplement this statement by adding, *“I feel like if they would've been on my job, then it would've been probably beneficial because I could've given them a little more help and dumped more stuff in their lap... instead of that long-distance relationship.”*

The challenge that proximity presented to the mentors in this interview was not successfully navigated by everyone. Simon identified the physical separation as a critical barrier that he felt prevented him from being successful as a mentor. During the interview he confessed, *“I mentored him for nine months and it's kind of at a stall right now because we're trying to learn the value of (mentoring from) five hours away as far as what we're getting out of it.”* One adaptive technique that several of the mentors employed because of being physically separated from their mentee, was leveraging their relationship with the superintendent on the project that the mentee was working on. This behavior has been identified as sponsorship and is in line with the career functions that Kram (1985) identified as a function of a mentoring relationship. Simon recalled that he would frequently use the supervisor of his mentee to overcome the mentee

resistance he encountered, *“Well, I think without (the onsite superintendent) being down in Iowa it would have been almost impossible. He was my go-to guy for everything”*. Simon continued to explain how he utilized the onsite superintendent to gather information regarding progress and opportunities of his mentees, *“Hey what's he doing? Hey is he doing this, is he doing that?”* *Because if you asked the other guys that, the guys you're mentoring, it was yes all the time. How do I know? I'm five hours away”*.

The tactic of using the organizational network to assist in the mentoring process was also used by Peter. Peter reminisced about the challenges of mentoring an individual that was not assigned to the same project, *“One thing I probably forgot to mention, is we also lean on other mentors. I'm a mentor for these two guys. The person who's distance is the thing for me, he's also working on a job for another superintendent who's also a mentor to two other people. So there's ways to cross-functionally mentor, I might be able to say, ‘Hey, I'm not going to be able to make it down there this month. Do you have anything coming up that covers x,y,z that you could involve so-and-so on to bring him up to speed?’”*. Research on mentoring recognizes that mentoring may not always be limited to a dyadic relationship, but it can be expanded to include positive career and professional networks (eg. Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas 2001; Kram, 1996). “Under this perspective,” say Ragins and Verbos (2007), “mentoring extends beyond the dyad to a constellation of developmental relationships that supply career assistance and psychosocial support to the protégé” (p. 93).

Navigating Silos

The second theme that emerged from the result of this study was navigating silos. The term silo in this study is a borrowed term that originated from Phil S. Ensor (1988), an organizational consultant. Silos refers to an organizational system in which information is not

adequately shared but rather remains sequestered in a vertical hierarchy within a department. Ensor found that there is often friction when operating across organizational groups.

Both superintendent training programs that participated in this study focused on training mentees how to navigate the industry structure and leverage internal departments to effectively serve the project. This was done by providing formal training within the programs and focusing on the job training requirements and mentoring session objectives around educating and exposing assistant superintendents to the departments within a general contractor's organization as well as externally with project partners. In this study, the navigating silos theme was a focal point to the mentoring experience. Existing literature has many examples in which effective mentors aid mentees in navigating organizational systems (eg. Ogdie, et al., 2017; Hu, Wang, Yang, & Wu, 2014; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

To understand how navigating silos is an organizational factor within this study it is important to understand the structure of the industry and the composition of the company. ABC, like many organizations has several departments that manage various tasks for the group. Additionally, the construction industry is structurally organized so that companies often specialize in specific tasks. It is rare to have a single organization successfully deliver any construction project without partnering and subcontracting specialized worked to trade specific organizations. This structure requires extensive collaboration and communication with all project partners both internally and externally. Additionally, this requirement is often complicated as team members find it challenging to effectively coordinate information across multiple organizational silos.

Within ABC itself, the organization is project oriented. The coordination of contracts will be managed by the project management group. Each project will be led by a project

executive who oversees several projects. A project manager will be responsible for managing the budget and may have several people assisting them such as a project engineer, a project coordinator, an estimator and an accountant. On the field side, the director of field operations will assign a superintendent to the project. They will be responsible for the schedule logistics on site. In addition, there are several departments that assist the organization in various capacities including marketing, legal, human resources, IT, virtual design, safety, and quality control among others. Individuals within each of these departments perform specialized functions that contribute to the successful acquisition, and/or delivery of a project. At the project level, scopes of work are divided up into specialized trades and tasks that are performed. For example, the footings will be executed by a concrete contractor, masonry foundations by a masonry contractor, the structural steel by a steel contractor and so forth. The industry is so subdivided that it is rare for a single project component be delivered by a single contractor (Lemke, 2018). Take an exterior window for example, that window will be installed by a glazing contractor into an opening provided by the framing contractor and will only be watertight if moisture barrier installer along with several other specialized trades coordinate the sequencing and dimensional specifics of that window product.

Within ABC, some mentors in this study expressed frustration about being responsible to train on topics that these individuals were not a subject matter expert of. A superintendent will need to make decisions that require coordination and input from the organization's various departments. Simon expressed his concern by saying, *"I think the (training) content needs to be more tailored to (ABC) day to day than what it is right now."* Simon recalled that despite the superintendent training program being developed by ABC, with the intention to develop Superintendents for ABC, the program was written without taking into consideration internal

standards of operation. Rather the content was better suited to the industry as it appeared to borrow content from existing programs such as the Carpenter's Superintendent Training without incorporating the formal training sessions of the Carpenter's program. James echoed a similar sentiment that ABC needs to do more to customize the formal learning expectations of the Superintendent training by stating, *"I feel that they (ABC) let us down a little bit...they've put a number of people through this program and they leave it all up to just you and your two mentees"*. James continued this thought by expressing his desire for the company to enlist the help of ABC subject matter experts to educate mentees on company policies and procedures. James stated, *"I tried to set up a deal with the legal team and HR. I like to bring them in and I was even willing to set it up with the other (mentor groups), you know, there's four or five of us. We could bring them in and maybe have a little group or a session. What do we want to educate these guys on the HR, the do's and the don'ts about personalities and issues on the job site. I tried to set that up, but it never materialized."* Both James and Simon felt it would have been a better learning experience for the mentee, as well as a training moment for the mentor, if a concerted effort was given to coordinate between departments to have each department speak to their own strengths and how their role intersects with the duties of a Superintendent. James felt that the company should do a better job personalizing the program to improve organizational standards and interdepartmental training. He lamented that, *"I don't really hear a lot of feedback from the rest of the people at (ABC), I don't think they knew a lot about it. I don't know that there were any external communications with anybody other than (the director of field operations)"*. From the perspective of both these mentors, the administration of the Superintendent training could use improvement by integrating department specific education opportunities into the program.

How Navigating Silos affected Mentors Approach to Mentoring

Although ABC did not formally integrate departments into the Superintendent training, several mentors did leverage their personal networks to tackle skillsets that they as mentors were weak on. Peter, for instance recalled, *“Sometimes there's stuff that comes up that the mentor doesn't know, and then you both learn together. I don't know everything about HR, but I know who to call. And if they're open to it than maybe we both go there and we both learn together.”* Similarly, John recalled in the interview how he recruited individuals within his professional network to help talk to subjects that he was not an authority on. John remembered calling past project managers that he had worked with, *“I think I called on all of them... you pick out who's best at whatever the subject matter is going to be. Some of them are better at certain things than others, so I tried to figure out who would be the best person to deal with this subject matter, and set up some time and we'd meet here at the warehouse or go out to their job.”* In this way, John and Peter would bridge departmental silos. This tactic correlated to Laiho and Brant's (2012) study that claimed mentoring is more effective at transferring tacit knowledge from mentors to protégés than formal training. Mentees that got this experience not only learned the corporate policies and procedures that were part of the program content, but also expanded the mentees network as they made a personal connection to individuals that made the decisions they were learning about.

The viewpoint that each department should be integrated into the training was not universally accepted by each mentor. Andrew felt that collaboration with every department was overemphasized. This mentor saw value in some cross functional training, but only as it integrated with the daily tasks of a superintendent. It was this mentor's opinion that the best way to learn how to be a superintendent was not to spend the time learning the functions of each

department and their interaction across the enterprise, rather developing the interpersonal skills needed to collaborate with project partners to solve field issues or deal with difficult owners and even how to maintain a positive working relationship with regulatory agencies. Andrew challenged the value of exposing the protégé to every department within the organization, *“I think that's a lot better mentoring moment (describing a challenging situation on the job) than him going to sit in to a marketing interview and listen to something that doesn't mean a damn thing. So, we've been doing mentoring things like that all the time. Like how do I get this done? How do you work with people? And it's better just to do it in the trenches... But with me being able to work with him on site I think I would mentor him in a better way just by helping him do his job on the project. I'd probably give myself a C at best with the true mentoring program. At best!”*

Although most of the participants of this study acknowledged that departmental silos were an organizational barrier to effective superintendent training, within the sphere of influence that the mentors had on their own projects, every participant stressed the importance of a collaborative work environment and the necessity of managing people. John insisted that, *“the most confusing thing that I found from a mentee is they come in thinking they have to know all the different aspects of construction. They don't. You just have to know or be able to identify when those areas are falling behind or mismanaged. Or unsafe. Or whatever that is. If that red flag pops up, I always tell them if you think something's wrong in that area, it probably is. Don't be afraid to address it. Grab that foreman. Or if the foreman doesn't work, grab their field ops guys and say, "Hey, this isn't been going great. We're missing dates. We're missing schedule. We're seeing some guys that are doing some unsafe things," and corral it sooner than later.”*

This theme of navigating silos was the subject of a recent mentoring article written by

Gilrein and Wolfe (2016). The article described how mentees and mentors were able to leverage a mentoring program to bridge departmental silos and create a collaborative environment that benefited the organization. In the concluding remarks of the article, it stressed that the collaboration required the support and trust from involved departments.

Empowering Protégés

The third organizational factor that emerged was the theme *empowering protégés*. Mentors in this study described how they would empower their mentees to develop and grow professionally and personally. From the perspective of the mentee, the mentor was the organizational factor that provided the psychological empowerment to the protégé. The results of this study support the findings of Fullick-Jagiela, Verbos and Wiese (2015) where applying an empowering perspective to relational mentoring protégés were found to be more proactive in their careers. In this study, mentors saw this empowerment not as a guarantee of learning and development, but merely an opportunity to take advantage of. Mentors described their pedagogy as a process in which they could provide an opportunity for growth to the mentees, but recognized this opportunity also came with additional challenges and responsibilities.

The first pedagogical practice that contributed to the theme of *empowering protégés* was proving a challenging assignment to a protégé. These challenging assignments were often designed to encourage the mentee to practice areas that were weak points in the protégés skillset. These challenges allowed protégés to develop individually and professionally. The second pedagogical practice that contributed to the theme of empowering protégés was the practice of role modeling. Mentees that were on the same site as a mentor were able to witness challenges arise and how mentors worked to resolve the conflicts. Often this pedagogical practice included debriefing with the mentee to discuss what actions were taken and why a certain course of action

was taken.

Challenges - the Conduit of Improvement

John and Andrew described their pedagogy of mentoring during the interview. These mentors focused on identifying underdeveloped skills that are necessary for being successful, then provided challenges and opportunities for their mentees to practice those skills. John told the story of his new carpenter foreman who was described as an excellent carpenter. The man was an expert at understanding how to manipulate the material or product he was installing and create a quality product in an efficient manner. Although this new foreman was skilled at the work, he was not skilled at delegating the work to others. John's solution was to offer the opportunity to run certain meetings. During the interview John recalled, *"I have a carpenter foreman (who) is a phenomenal carpenter, he's a great human being, you couldn't ask for a better person. He struggles a little bit talking in front of people. He struggles a little bit in trying to identify daily tasks for people. So, we've helped him quite a bit in that."* John continued by describing how adding duties that were his mentee's personal weak points allowed his protégé to become proficient at those duties. Because of consistent practice on a weak skillset, John's mentee is now able to run the foreman meetings effectively and can share the technical aspects of his construction skillset to a room full of individuals.

Similarly, Andrew utilizes his dual role as supervisor and mentor to delegate project responsibilities to his mentee. Andrew admitted, *"I think I'm a little hard on (my mentee). I don't pussyfoot around... I'm not used to (it), it's not holding hands, it's the real world."* Andrew continued by describing how he was proud of his mentee for keeping a positive attitude when he would challenge him with additional responsibilities. Andrew mentioned that, *"Every so often he (the mentee) goes, was that a mentoring moment? I went, yep. So, we do this like five times a*

week. Is that a mentoring moment? What do you think? I think that was a mentoring moment."

For both these mentors, their protégés recognized that challenges are important to development. Stimulating mentees with challenging assignments has been supported by mentoring studies since Kram, (1985) identified the trait as being integral to the career function of mentoring.

Role Modeling- an Example of Success

James' and Peter's philosophy toward mentoring was described slightly differently than John's or Andrew's. James also saw how learning and development was going to be tied to experience and the tacit knowledge of doing the work, and how this process could be expedited by being paired with a mentor (Laiho & Brant, 2012). James felt it was important for mentees to witness problems come up and to watch how the mentor reacts to these challenges. James attempted to summarize his approach to mentoring by stating, *"They're going to end up getting their knowledge, you know, through the course, of the job."* James saw his role was to be a role model to these individuals, *"When you're working with them every day and they're seeing different problems come to you and how you react to them and try and get (the mentee) thinking about that."* Peter described how he would have his mentee sit in on meetings when there were difficult conversations with subcontractors. Peter explained, *"So anytime something rose up, whether it was subcontractor resolution (for example). We were having issues with some of the them on schedules. So, I was like, "C'mon. We're going to go sit these guys down. We're going to talk to them. Afterwards we'll reflect back and see how we were."* By taking the time with the protégé after the meeting to reflect on the content, there was an opportunity to provide experience and insight to both the mentor and mentee. This study result supports Barret, Mazerolle and Nottingham's (2017) findings that mentoring relationships developed with ongoing communication and an investment by both parties. Additionally, James felt the

individuals that took part in a superintendent training program had the ability to make good decisions. James insisted, *“In creating or developing people, (my role) is probably making them comfortable with their knowledge so they can become comfortable making decisions... Youngsters, they don't want to do anything wrong and they actually know more than they think.”* James concluded that mentees often know the correct course of action but often need to feel supported when making the right call. These findings support the work of Warhurst (2011) who concluded that, “social learning in the form of role modelling was highly significant in the manager development” (p.887).

Discussion

The themes that emerged from the result of this study reveal what these mentors felt were important organizational factors that affected their approach to mentoring within a formal superintendent training program. These factors included the themes proximity, navigating silos, and empowering protégés. Each organizational factor presented challenges that mentors needed to adapt to.

The Mentors interviewed clearly identified proximity as an organizational factor that affected how they mentored. From the Mentor’s perspective, the desire to have the mentee work on the same project did not have any drawbacks. This arrangement would allow the superintendent to integrate mentoring activities with daily tasks of the protégé. From the protégé’s perspective, the decision may not be so clear. The roles of a boss as well as a mentor have areas that conflict. As stressful issues arise at work, a protégé may wish to discuss the friction they are experiencing with their mentor and not their boss (Reitz, Sudano, Siler, & Trimble, 2016). If that boss *is* the mentor than the protégé may need to find additional resources within their network to either vent or gain perspective on the issue. If on the other hand, the

mentor is supportive of the protégé, either of the dyads may be accused of favoritism (Kram K, 1985). This also may negatively affect the relationship.

From the organization's perspective, it is difficult to find a project that is large enough to require an assistant superintendent. Many projects can only afford a single superintendent and therefore the situation would not be able to sustain two. In these cases, the organization has no choice but to have the protégé on a separate job than the mentor. Even if the project is big enough, the formal mentoring period is 18 months long and it may be difficult to coordinate the mentoring program's schedule with the project schedule. For these instances when geographic proximity is not achievable, a more structured communication plan may be required. Lach, Hertz, Pomeroy, Resnick and Buckwalter (2013) found that increased communication of expectations, a mutually agreed upon plan about communication needs, as well as adequate planning for dyads to connect and meet goals were essential to successful distance mentoring relationships.

Navigating silos, the second theme that resulted from this study, was one that possibly could be influenced by the style of superintendent mentoring program that is offered. In this study, four of the participants were enrolled in a program that was sponsored by the Carpenters Union. As this program included several classroom style learning opportunities during the course of the program, taught by industry respected subject matter experts, many industry standard lessons could be generalized to the group. The last superintendent was a participant in a company specific program and did not have the resources available that the first group of superintendents were given. In both scenarios, mentors expressed interest in providing an opportunity to integrate company departments into the Superintendent Training. This would require organizational departments that coordinate with superintendents to participate in the educating. The mentees

will not need to understand how each department functions in its entirety, but this collaboration has the possibility of building networks and helping mentees understand the support system that is available.

The final theme, empowering protégés is an area of strength at ABC, according to the mentors interviewed. In this study, mentors chose pedagogical styles that suited their personality and the situation. Since this study did not interview the protégés, it is unknown whether these pedagogical styles were methods preferred by the protégé. It is plausible that protégés may perceive one method as more effective than another depending on personality or work style. This claim is supported by Eby, McManus, Simon and Russel (2000) who found dyads had preferences based on work styles, values, or personality of the mentor and mentee. Additionally, Germain (2011) also found that attachment styles may affect the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship.

Chapter Five

Summary

In summation, this study examined the superintendent training method of a single construction company in the Midwest United States. This study identified organizational factors that either facilitated or inhibited the educational process. Mentors were interviewed to determine what perceived factors affected their pedagogy and how their teaching style was influenced. Common organizational factors have been identified through the research that contribute to the development of superintendents in their training process. As important as establishing a positive relationship between mentor and mentee, the organization holds similar responsibility in providing an environment conducive to professional and personal development. As a result, if an organization wants to capitalize on the training program provided, they must work with mentors to recognize and eliminate barriers.

Significant Findings

This study offers a contribution to the body of research on Construction Superintendent Training specifically and organizational mentoring in general. For the mentors in this study, the three organizational factors that affected their mentoring pedagogy were proximity, navigating silos, and empowering protégés. The theme proximity supports the existing literature that recognizes that mentors and mentees need consistent communication and engagement. As such, proximity can become a significant barrier if the geographic distance is not overcome by structured meetings and frequent contact. Mentors that worked on the same job as the mentee reported significant advantages to that arrangement. Mentors that worked at a different location than the mentee reported the need for additional effort to schedule frequent meetings and

telephone conversations to maintain the relationship. The second theme, navigating silos, found that the industry's structure of specialized contractors performing limited scopes of work, along with the organization's structure of having multiple specialized departments, was a challenge for mentors. Although the organizational factor was recognized by each mentor interviewed, the approaches to working within silos were unique. The mentors did agree universally that collaboration was essential to success and that learning how to manage people was a critical skill to the role of a superintendent. Finally, the last theme empowering protégés, identified the mentor's pedagogy as an organizational factor. This theme highlighted how mentors would provide challenging assignments and/or role model to help establish the parameters for how to succeed in the superintendent role.

Educational Implications

Overall, organizational leaders need to recognize how their roles and responsibilities include providing an educational framework for their employees. The results of this study showed how organizational factors can either positively or negatively impact the success of the superintendent mentoring program. To help facilitate a worthwhile experience, leadership considerations should include determining where to staff employees in relation to their mentor/trainer, recognizing processes for overcoming organizational structure challenges, and establishing how to create a culture that facilitates necessary employee education throughout the organization. Although organizational leadership should ideally be proactive in their professional role in education, some barriers are easier to navigate than others.

Facilitating educational opportunities

In this study, the collaborative culture within the organization and industry helped facilitate learning opportunities that were not part of the program's design. Industry

organizations can recognize that they serve in facilitating a positive educational environment for their employees. They are not necessarily meant to be the primary educator; however, administration can work to ease the difficulty that mentors/mentees face when organizing training opportunities. In this study mentors demonstrated how logistical issues from being geographically separated from a mentee could be solved by collaborating with members from the mentor's professional network if barriers were presented. Similarly, where ABC did not formally integrate training with several supporting departments, mentors leveraged personal relationships with individuals from those departments to help train mentees in organizational policies and the reasoning behind them.

Existing literature advocates that organizations train mentors to understand their pedagogy (Pfund, et al., 2014). Each mentor excels at different teaching methods, as each mentee learns via different teaching methods (Beech & Brockbank, 1999). Organizations can facilitate dyad pairing to match personalities. By connecting an appropriate protégé with their mentor, a relationship can help facilitate a developmental relationship. Finally, through promoting each mentor's pedagogy, mentors were able to utilize challenges and create opportunities for their mentee to feel empowered and personalize identified successes.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study express the experience of the mentors interviewed within a Midwest construction superintendent training program. Future research on comparing the themes found in this study with other industry mentoring programs could help identify whether these themes can be generalized to a broader population. Additionally, strictly interviewing mentors did not gain the perspective of other stakeholders within the organization. Future research could include perspectives from the organizational leadership, from the mentees, and

from industry partners that subcontract with ABC who work with the mentees during the mentee's training.

Limitations

The perceived gender identification and ethnic backgrounds of the mentors interviewed were quite similar. Although this is representative of the current industry's leadership in this geographic area, this study does not help identify challenges that may arise when mentoring an underrepresented ethnicity or gender. As this is a limitation in this study, future research should also look to including underrepresented ethnicities and genders.

Summary

This paper looked at how organizational factors influenced a personal relationship. Although the mentors and mentees in this paper were paired through a formal educational program, the development of the protégé happened through organic interactions. Organizational leaders understanding how their decisions can impact these relationships is important to balance project delivery goals as well as employee development needs. Hopefully researchers will continue to discover how the contextual environment affects the mentoring relationships and how organizations can maximize the impact of these developmental relationships.

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Appendices

Appendix I

IRB Approval Letter or Email

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Human Research Protection Program
Office of the Vice President for Research

*D528 Mayo Memorial Building
420 Delaware Street S.E.
MMC 820
Minneapolis, MN 55455
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EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

January 22, 2019

Lynn Brice

218-340-2618
lbrice@umn.edu

Dear Lynn Brice:

On 1/22/2019, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Organizational Influences of Mentoring Relationships: A Qualitative study of a Commercial General Contractor's Superintendent Training Program
Investigator:	Lynn Brice
IRB ID:	STUDY00005286
Sponsored Funding:	None
Grant ID/Con Number:	None
Internal UMN Funding:	None
Fund Management Outside University:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed with this Submission:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superintendent Mentoring , Category: IRB Protocol;• Consent Form, Category: Consent Form;• Letter of Support , Category: Letters of Support / Approvals (Location);• Interview Questions, Category: Other;• _David K 12 26 18 recruitment letter.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that this study meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To arrive at this determination, the IRB used "WORKSHEET: Exemption (HRP-312)." If

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you have any questions about this determination, please review that Worksheet in the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) and contact the IRB office if needed.

This study met the following category for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that Human Subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the Human Subjects responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability, or reputation

Ongoing IRB review and approval for this study is not required; however, this determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a Modification to the IRB for a determination.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) on the IRB website.

For grant certification purposes, you will need these dates and the Assurance of Compliance number which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003).

Sincerely,

Bri Warner
IRB Analyst

We value feedback from the research community and would like to hear about your experience. The link below will take you to a brief survey that will take a minute or two to complete. The questions are basic, but your responses will help us better understand what we are doing well and areas that may require improvement. Thank you in advance for completing the survey.

Even if you have provided feedback in the past, we want and welcome your evaluation.

<http://z.umn.edu/irbsurvey>

Appendix II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. As you were transitioning into your current role as a field superintendent, describe one of the most influential experiences you had that prepared you for the role.
2. The Superintendent training program offers a list of mentoring topics: Has this approach helped facilitate or restrict your approach to mentoring?
 - a. What expectations has ABC communicated to you about your involvement in the program? Have those expectations been appropriately supported?
3. Describe the relationship with your mentee.
 - a. Are there particular factors in which ABC has either facilitated or inhibited your relationship with your protégé?
4. How do you find time to mentor while managing a project?
 - a. How does mentoring impact your personal life, or vice versa?
5. If ABC asked you about how to enhance the superintendent mentoring program, what are three things that you would do or change?
6. Is there anything that you think is important that I didn't ask you about?